

Significant Lives — Chapter 3

By Jim Golden — Who Has Bewitched You?

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

I sat on my back porch playing my guitar with tears in my eyes. As I sat there I was pondering the last two decades of my life as a Christian. The end of this road now found me in debt, out of work for the 14th time in 7 years, and feeling like a real failure. Being out of work and in debt were not the reasons. In today's economy that isn't unusual. What was causing my sense of failure was my inability to find my place of service for God and those special relationships we all dream of as Christians. Echoing over and over in the background of my thoughts came the phrase, "Who has bewitched you?" This is a question most of us should ask ourselves today.

Before I was born my real father told my mother she would have a son who would be born with white hair. He would grow up and become a preacher. This was before she knew she was pregnant. This man never married my mother, why, I never found out. It was a question I avoided. I thought not knowing was better than actually hearing that he rejected me. Now that my mother has passed away I may never know. However, that prophecy, as it were, along with all the other confirming words from esteemed men of God only added to my sense of failure. Not only was I out of work but try as I would the ability to come, or get into some meaningful service for God was constantly eluding me.

Then my thoughts began to wander back down the road I had walked. When I was first *born again* and filled with the Holy Spirit, life was much different. I walked with God in simplicity. Miracles were expected occurrences. I simply heard the voice of my new heavenly father and did what he told me. As a result blind eyes were opened, a dead man was raised back to life and many other wonderful things took place. My joy was overflowing.

Suddenly the thought came to me that I had more harm done to me as a Christian than I had done to me as an unbeliever. "Who has bewitched you," the still small inner voice said to me again. "You were doing so well, running the race." I began to feel tears run down my cheek, but without the normal feelings that usually accompany crying, as though pain was surfacing that was so deep within me my mind wasn't fully aware it was there.

I thought back to my first experiences in working with a group of men in building the Kingdom of God. How they sought to *harness* the potential power of God within me. They undertook my discipleship and ordained me as a pastor. When it

was all over I was left much worse off than when we had met. It was partially my fault. I allowed myself to be seduced by the enticing words of men's wisdom and the promise of glory. I had put my hope in man rather than God and my heart contracted a disease called *deferred hope*. For all practical purposes I had been bewitched!

I could hear Paul's piercing words ringing in my ears, *Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?* God had begun his fathering of me. He wanted to teach me his ways but like most children who get old enough to think they know something I mistakenly turned to someone else for my guidance. The stage was well set for this desertion. Subconscious fear of being led astray caused me to put my trust in man instead of God. Verses like, *"In the multitude of counsel there is safety."* were skillfully used to persuade me into disregarding other scriptures like, *"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth."* Slowly over a period of 10 years I watched as the joy of my salvation and the power of God bled out of me.

The problem with putting your hope in man is the dependency that comes along for the ride. Eventually, even the most saintly of men will abandon you. When this happens we are left feeling inadequate to move on in the life of the Spirit. The only one we can ever really be dependent on and not disappointed by is Jesus. As Adam fell in the garden, when he chose to be independent, so I had chosen to be dependent on someone other than God and fell. This is a shared transgression. Just like Adam was seduced into becoming independent so we are being seduced into putting our trust in men. Men may sometimes make good companions but they always make poor gods. All of our instructions as leaders should turn the eyes and the hearts of God's children to God.

I am beginning to experience a small portion of what I knew when I first walked with Jesus in simplicity. My prayer is that I have not suffered in vain. If you are reading this and are in a similar boat or moving in the same direction heed my words. The Lord is faithful and able to keep whatever is committed to his care. He is a faithful Father and a jealous God. He not only desires but demands the right to raise and nurture his children. Do not let fear of any kind enter in between you and your loving Savior. Heed my words and I will not have suffered in vain.

It may be true that more damage can be done to us at the hands of *well meaning* Christians, than at the hands of the *ungodly*. God is the Ancient of Days, the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father . Why would we entrust our souls to anyone else? I am concerned over those who have said that they will give an account for my soul by becoming my teachers. No matter how well meant their intentions were the end-product of usurping God's role in someone's life is misuse and abuse. I want to go on record as forgiving them and releasing them from their sin to me in this area, as I ask forgiveness of those I have abused in a like manner.

In our youthful zeal we often usurp God's role in the lives of those we touch. In the things of God the oldest among us is still an infant. Before it is too late let us all clothe ourselves with the garments of humility and repentance and return to our Heavenly Father's faithful arms today.